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Message Text

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44
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OFA-01 OES-03 DLOS-04 IO-10

AID-05 OMB-01 /075 W
---------- 064461
O P 301832Z DEC 75
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8173
INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 10662

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, CI, BOL, PE
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO THE SEA

REFS: STATE 301358, LA PAZ 9018, STATE 303998

SUMMARY: EMBASSY SHARES HOPE THAT SUCCESSFUL BOLIVIAN-CHILEAN NEGOTIATIONS, AND SUBSEQUENT PERUVIAN AGREEMENT, CAN BRING HAPPY CONCLUSION TO CENTURY-OLD PROBLEM OF BOLIVIA'S LAND-LOCKED STATUS. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE A U.S. DEMARCHE HERE ALONG LINES SUGGESTED BY EMBASSY LA PAZ WOULD BE PREMATURE AND PROBABLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. PREMATURE BECAUSE WE BELIEVE GOP WILL NOT WISH RUN UNDUE DOMESTIC POLITICAL RISKS THROUGH QUICK AGREEMENT UNDER PRESSURE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE BECAUSE PERCEIVED U.S. HAND COULD RAISE GOP SUSPICIONS OF OUR MOTIVES AND GALVANIZE POTENTIAL LEFTIST/NATIONALIST OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

1. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, PERUVIAN FONOFF VIEW IS THAT PERU SHOULD EVENTUALLY AGREE TO CHILEAN CESSION TO BOLIVIA OF A CORRIDOR ALONG THE PERUVIAN BORDER IN FORMER PERUVIAN TERRITORY. THIS IS PROBABLY THE VIEW, OR WILL (IF GIVEN TIME) BECOME THE VIEW, OF THE MORALES BERMUDEZ REGIME.
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2. WE HAVE ALSO REPORTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION HERE REMAINS UNSTABLE. THE CORRIDOR QUESTION IS ONE AMONG SEVERAL UNSETTLING ELEMENTS. WE KNOW OF MIDDLE-GRADE OFFICERS TO WHO THE SUBJECT TERRITORY REMAINS IRREDENTA AND WHO SAY THEY WILL "NEVER" AGREE TO FINALLY GIVING IT UP. THERE ARE THOSE TO THE RIGHT AND LEFT OF THE MORALES BERMUDEZ GOVERNMENT WHO WILL OPPOSE A CORRIDOR THROUGH ARICA. THE QUESTIONS ARE, HOW STRONGLY AND HOW SUCCESSFULLY? THE GOP OBVIOUSLY RECOGNIZES THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS, AND THE FONOFF COMMUNIQUE (LIMA 10628) REVEALS NO BREAK-NECK HASTE TO AGREE TO A FINAL SETTLEMENT.

3. WE THINK MOST PERUVIANS IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT PERCEIVE NO U.S. HAND IN THE CURRENT ACTIVITY REGARDING A BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO THE SEA. THIS FACT IS HELPFUL IN THE PERUVIAN ENVIROMENT OF DEEP AND WIDE-SPREAD SUSPICIONS OF U.S. MOTIVES GENERALLY. (BUT THERE ARE ALREADY SOME WARNING SIGNALS: A DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUE TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT ONE PERUVIAN OFFICER TO THE IDEOLOGICAL RIGHT OF THE GOP BELIEVES THE RECENT BOLIVIAN-CHILEAN INITIATIVES WERE PROMPTED BY THE U.S. WORKING THROUGH BRAZIL AND BOLIVIA, FOR THE PURPOSE OF EMBARRASSING AND ULTIMATELY "DESTABILIZING" THE PERUVIAN REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT. HE ADDED THAT THIS IS FAIRLY STANDARD LINE AMONG LEFTISTS.)

4. THE PERUVIAN LEFT, WITH WIDESPREAD INFLUENCE IN THE MEDIA, HAS SO FAR BEEN CONTENT TO REPORT THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET STORY FACTUALLY (INCLUDING THE OPPOSITION EXPRESSED BY BOLIVIAN EXILES) AND TO MAKE THE POINT THAT PERUVIAN ACQUIESCENCE IS REQUIRED FOR ANY CESSION OF FORMER PERUVIAN TERRITORY. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE LEFT WOULD IMMEDIATELY BRAND A U.S. INITIATIVE AS INTERFERENCE IN PERUVIAN AFFAIRS. A U.S. MOVE WHICH BECAME KNOWN COULD GALVANIZE OPPOSITION TO A SETTLEMENT FROM THE PERUVIAN RIGHT AND LEFT, THUS COMPLICATING, DELAYING OR MAKING IMPOSSIBLE GOP AGREEMENT.

5. THE AMBASSADOR SPOKE INFORMALLY DECEMBER 29 WITH AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO WASHINGTON GARCIA BEDOYA ABOUT THE INITIATIVES TOWARD A BOLIVIAN OUTLET TO THE SEA. THE AMBASSADOR SAID WE WELCOMED THE POSSIBILITY OF A SETTLEMENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT REGARDED THE MATTER AS A SENSITIVE TRILATERAL ONE IN WHICH HE THOUGHT THERE WAS NO USEFUL ROLE FOR THE U.S. TO PLAY AT THIS TIME. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT WE MIGHT BE HELPFUL AFTER THE THREE PARTIES HAD REACHED AGREEMENT. GARCIA BEDOYA STRONGLY AGREED THAT THE QUESTION IS NOW ONE SOLELY INVOLVING CHILE, BOLIVIA AND PERU AND SAID THIS IS ONE ITEM ON HIS AGENDA TO DISCUSS IN WASHINGTON AT AN EARLY DATE.

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6. EMBASSY CONCLUDES THAT A GENERAL STATEMENT FROM WASHINGTON WELCOMING PROSPECTS FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE LAND-LOCKED BOLIVIA PROBLEM WOULD BE THE MAXIMUM U.S. INITIATIVE OPEN TO US AT THIS TIME, AND EVEN THIS CARRIES SOEM RISK OF COMPLICATING PROSPECTS FOR A FAVORABLE DECISION HERE. WOULD NOT A SIMILAR GENERAL STATEMENT EMANATING FROM THE OAS WITH U.S. SUPPORT BE A MORE DESIRABLE FIRST STEP?
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